

Make Every Bite Count

There will always be a variety of diets, food fads and eating habits. You learned about nutrition in school, but new research continues to guide recommendations. Where do Americans hear about this research? Why should it impact their food choices?

Magazines at the grocery store checkout lane always feature various headlines like “eat this and lose pounds” or “drink this miracle cure.” Social media and web-site pop-up ads also promote various diets and food fads.

I encourage you to not rely on magazine and social media for your nutrition education. As a Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent, I want to share research-based resources and information. Think of me as your community nutrition educator since you are no longer in school.

Recently, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025 was released. The U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Health and Human Services (HHS) jointly publish a report containing nutritional and dietary information and guidelines for the general public every five years.

The first guidelines were printed when I was in grade school in 1980. It was a comprehensive report with science-based advice on what to eat and drink to promote health, reduce risk of chronic disease, and meet nutrient needs. (These came out after I had the school teacher that required everyone to eat at least one bite of everything. I still gag at the thought of canned spinach.)

The 2020 version is the first guidelines that provide guidance for healthy dietary patterns by life stage, from birth through older adulthood. The emphasis is on the importance of a healthy dietary pattern as a whole— rather than on individual nutrients, foods, or food groups in isolation.

The information in the Dietary Guidelines is used to develop, implement, and evaluate Federal food, nutrition, and health policies and programs. For my work, my educational programs are updated to include the latest research-based recommendations and information.

These guidelines also impact nutrition education components of USDA and HHS nutrition programs (examples are school lunch programs, commodities, adult feeding programs).

The aim of the Dietary Guidelines is to promote health and prevent disease, not to tell you exactly what to eat. I encourage you to make every bite count -- which means I will skip the canned spinach and instead choose fresh or lightly sautéed spinach.

For more ideas or information about future classes, contact K-State Research and Extension Cowley County at 620-221-5450.

Source: dietaryguidelines.gov

Upcoming K-State Research and Extension Events

Living Well Together programs are free but registration is required at bit.ly/LivingWellTogether-Feb.

February 18 – Living Well Together: Making Active Habits Stick, 6:45 p.m.

February 25 - Living Well Together: Living Well with Diabetes, 6:45 p.m.

March 25 - Mental Health First Aid for Adults, Arkansas City, \$35 advance registration required bit.ly/3i5XupF

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan.

